

**What is claimed is:**

1. An oligonucleotide 5 to 50 nucleotides in length which is complementary to at least a portion of an HCV genomic or messenger RNA, said oligonucleotide being hybridizable to  
5 said RNA and capable of inhibiting the function of said RNA.

2. The oligonucleotide of claim 1 wherein said RNA comprises at least a portion of the polyprotein translation initiation codon of an HCV RNA.

10 3. The oligonucleotide of claim 2 comprising SEQ ID NO: 6.

4. A composition comprising the oligonucleotide of claim 1 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

15 5. The composition of claim 4 further comprising interferon.

6. A phosphorothioate oligodeoxynucleotide having SEQ ID NO: 6 wherein every cytidine nucleotide is a 5-methylcytidine.

20 7. A composition comprising the oligonucleotide of claim 6 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

8. The composition of claim 7 further comprising interferon.

25 9. A method for inhibiting the activity of a Hepatitis C virus comprising contacting the virus or cells infected with the virus with an effective amount of the oligonucleotide of claim 1.

10. A method for inhibiting the activity of a Hepatitis C virus comprising contacting the virus or cells infected with the virus with an effective amount of the oligonucleotide of claim 6.

5 11. A method for treating an HCV-associated disease comprising contacting an animal suspected of having an HCV-associated disease, or tissues, cells or a bodily fluid from said animal, with a therapeutically effective amount of the oligonucleotide of claim 1.

10 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the HCV-associated disease is acute HCV infection, fulminant hepatitis, chronic active hepatitis, cirrhosis, or hepatocellular carcinoma.

15 13. A method for treating an HCV-associated disease comprising contacting an animal suspected of having an HCV-associated disease, or tissues, cells or a bodily fluid from said animal, with a therapeutically effective amount of the oligonucleotide of claim 6.

20 14. The method of claim 13 wherein the HCV-associated disease is acute HCV infection, fulminant hepatitis, chronic active hepatitis, cirrhosis, or hepatocellular carcinoma.

25 15. A method for preventing an HCV-associated disease comprising contacting an animal suspected of having been exposed to HCV, or cells, tissues or a bodily fluid from said animal, with a prophylactically effective amount of the oligonucleotide of claim 1.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the HCV-associated disease is acute HCV infection, fulminant hepatitis, chronic active hepatitis, cirrhosis, or hepatocellular carcinoma.

17. A method for preventing an HCV-associated disease comprising contacting an animal suspected of having been exposed to HCV, or cells, tissues or a bodily fluid from said animal, with a prophylactically effective amount of the  
5 oligonucleotide of claim 6.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the HCV-associated disease is acute HCV infection, fulminant hepatitis, chronic active hepatitis, cirrhosis, or hepatocellular carcinoma.

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